



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

NEWS RELEASE

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR LINGLE VETOES BILL TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL INTEREST UH REGENTS SELECTION COUNCIL

HONOLULU – Governor Linda Lingle today vetoed a bill that would create a narrow, special-interest-based selection process for appointing members to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents. The bill is counter to recommendations of the University's accrediting bodies and a national association of university governing boards. The bill also reduces transparency and accountability in the selection process.

Last November, voters approved an amendment to the State Constitution to establish an advisory council to fill vacancies on the Board of Regents. SB14 attempts to fulfill this mandate by establishing a seven-member candidate advisory council that would be made up of individuals selected by seven different interest groups. Under SB14, only one of the seven members of the council would be selected by the Governor.

"This bill is objectionable because it contradicts what public citizen trusteeship should be – that is, citizens who are independent in their individual and collective judgment and who serve the people of Hawai'i, not special interest groups," the Governor said in her veto message.

Three nationally recognized organizations have expressed serious concerns about the selection process proposed in SB14. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges have pointed out that the process contained in SB14 runs counter to the national best practices in university governance.

(more)

"I do not believe any governor, regardless of party, would agree to a process that is opposed by the President of the University of Hawai'i and those very organizations that judge whether to accredit the State's premier institution of higher learning," the Governor stated in her written message.

SB14 also would exempt the selection council from the state's open meeting laws, also known as the Sunshine Law, allowing the council to conduct proceedings behind closed doors away from public scrutiny. This would make it difficult for the public to know how nominees were selected, what criteria was applied and what screening process was used. Under such circumstances, it would be difficult for the selection council members to be accountable to the public.

"I cannot affix my signature to a bill that would pull the curtain down over essential government proceedings," the Governor told lawmakers in her veto message.

Governor Lingle proposed a bill (HB1431 / SB1517) to establish an advisory council to screen potential candidates for the Board of Regents. The Administration's bill does not create the kind of narrow, special-interest approach found in SB14 and it respects the importance of an open selection process. HB1431 received a hearing, but was held in committee. SB1517 did not receive a public hearing.

The Governor's statement of objections (veto message) is attached and can also be viewed on the Governor's Web site at: <http://www.hawaii.gov/gov/leg/2007-session/>.

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